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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, September 15, 1941

SUBJECT: "TIPS ON BUYING WOOL GOODS AND GARMENTS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Consumers' Counsel, U.S.D.A.

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You like to get your money's worth when you go shopping. Every woman does. So today you may be interested in tips to help you get your money's worth in wool goods.

Yes, the news today is about wool sweaters and blankets; wool coats, suits and dresses; about wool felt hats, and even wool for knitting. Judging wool goods correctly--making certain of a good buy--has never been an easy job for anyone who is not an expert. But this year it's easier than ever before because of a new law and new labels.

The Wool Products Labeling Act went into effect July 14, 1941. Under that law all manufactured products containing wool, or purporting to contain wool, except rugs and upholstery fabrics, have to sell with a label attached. And that label tells what kind of fibers the product contains, and how much of each kind.

Maybe you've noticed the new tags on wool articles in the shops this fall. On men's suits, for example, you may see a tag that says "100 percent wool," or one that says "all wool," or one that says "100 percent virgin wool." Those 3 statements all mean the same thing. They mean that all the fibers in the cloth are wool, and also that they're all new or virgin wool. New or virgin wool is wool never used before in any finished manufactured product.

But if the wool in the suit is not all new--if half of it has been used before, say, then the label has to say "50 percent re-used wool," or "50 percent re-processed wool," whichever it happens to be.

And that brings up a question many a shopper is asking in connection with the



new labels--Is new or virgin wool sure to be a better buy than re-processed or re-used wool?

The answer is: No. That's where the present labels, helpful as they are, don't tell the whole story. New or virgin wool may be of good quality or poor quality. The tags don't tell. Re-processed wool may be of good quality or poor quality. The tags don't say. The same is true of different grades of re-used wool. The tags just don't mention quality. Yet quality is important to you, if you want to get your money's worth in wool. You can buy new wool goods made of short, stubby, damaged fibers that make harsh, poor-wearing cloth. You can also buy new wool goods of long, fine, soft fibers that make resilient cloth that wears beautifully and takes a press beautifully. Yet both these fabrics, different as they are in quality, would have the same label under the present law.

So you see, the labels just give you a steer in the right direction, and after that you have to judge for yourself. But the labels are helpful in telling you whether the cloth is pure wool, or a mixture of wool and rayon, or wool and cotton. There's plenty of use for these mixtures, just as there's plenty of use for re-processed and re-used wool. But you, as a buyer, have a right to know what you're paying for.

The words "re-used" and "re-processed" may be a little confusing. Here's the difference. Re-processed wool has been woven once, then raveled and woven over again without ever being worn or used. Much re-processed wool comes from cuttings left in garment factories. It's new wool, for all practical purposes, though the fibers may have lost some resiliency and strength by 2 weavings. But good re-processed wool is probably a better buy than a poor quality new wool.

Re-used wool, on the other hand, is just what the word says--wool from fabrics that have been worn or used. Old fabrics are raveled. The wool is cleaned, treated, dyed and woven again. Re-used wool goes by the name of "shoddy," in the trade.





It may give better service than very poor grades of new wool or re-processed wool, but it's not as good a buy as comparable grades of new or re-processed wool.

Now let's leave the labels and consider a few ways to judge quality in wool when you're buying a suit, or a wool coat, or a piece of wool goods.

First, look for a firm weave. Second, look for some give or spring in the cloth. Woolen fabrics have a soft woolly nap over the surface, but for good wear they must have a firm weave as a foundation underneath. Take a piece of cloth and stretch it between your hands in both directions. See whether it feels springy and soft, but also firm and sturdy. That's the way good-quality wool feels. Poor quality wool feels lifeless and often hard and scratchy.

One other question you may wonder about as you shop for wool is: Does it always pay to buy the best quality wool goods? The answer again is: No, it depends on how you're going to use the fabric. If you are buying a winter coat for your husband this fall, you will probably be wise to buy excellent quality all virgin wool, because men's coats don't go out of style fast, and you want the coat to give long wear. On the other hand, if you are buying a coat for your young growing son, you wouldn't want to invest in such expensive long-wearing fabric because he'll soon outgrow the coat. And then, if you are buying a wool dress for yourself, you might do better not to pay for the finest quality material, because women's styles change during the years, and you might want to wear the dress only a couple of seasons.

That's all the tips on shopping for wool for today except one--a free bulletin called "Judging Fabric Quality." Write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for "Judging Fabric Quality," Farmers' Bulletin No. 1831. It is free while the free supply lasts.

